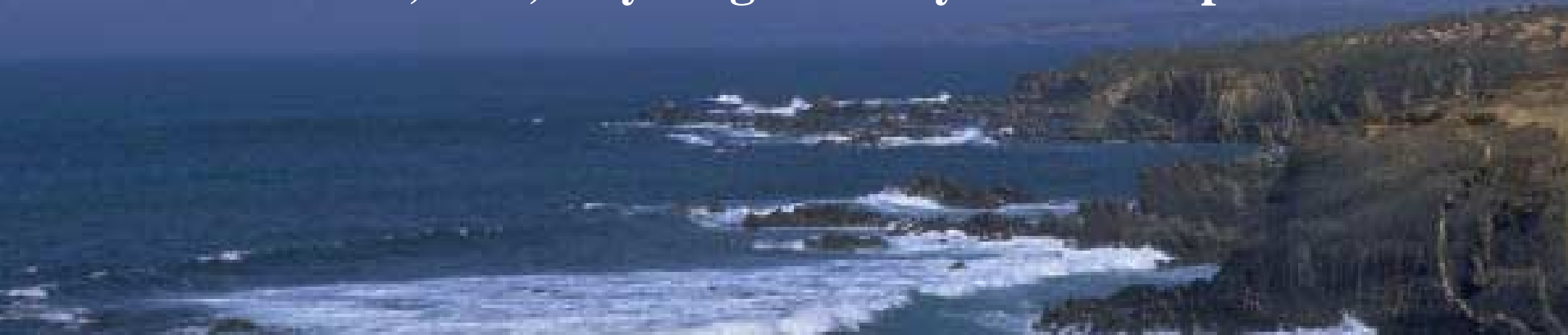


# **A Model Bathing Beach Program For Local Health Departments**

**Prepared By:**

**J. Jack Kurowski, R.S., City of Lorain Health Department  
and**

**Jill Lis, R.S., Cuyahoga County Health Department**



# Demographics

- **Cuyahoga County**
  - 2 public beaches
    - Lake Erie beach
    - Inland lake
  - 14 private beaches
- **Lorain City**
  - 2 public beaches
    - Lake Erie



# **Establishment of locations of all public and semi-public beaches – inland and lakeshore**

- **Know your jurisdiction – investigate all inland and lakeshore public gathering areas**
- **Joint effort with local Parks & Recreation Department, ODNR, local Port Authority, and the Coast Guard**
- **Review information with Army Corps of Engineers regarding lakeshore usage**



# **Initiate rule/regulation development for local program**

- **Objective: Maintaining safe and sanitary public recreational bathing operations to minimize the potential for disease transmission and personal safety concerns**
- **Adopt Board of Health Regulations or City Ordinances**



## **Program Development Cont...**

- **Development phase must include dialog with:**
  - **Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)**
  - **State EPA (OEPA)**
  - **City/County Division of Water Pollution Control**
  - **Local Parks and Recreation Departments**



# Sanitary survey of all beaches

- Priority-trace all sources of man-made contamination
- Obtain maps of all storm sewer discharge sites
- Trace discharge points of septic system tie-in(s)
  - Include investigation of illegal storm/sanitary tie-ins
    - Utilize local city service/building departments for data
- Educate the community regarding contamination factors



# Issue permit/license to operate beach

- The issuance of permit/license will mandate inspections
- Permit holder must allow local Health Department access to all areas for the purpose of administration and enforcement of current ordinances/regulations
- Board of Health/Licensing Agency may refuse to grant a permit or may suspend or revoke any permit issued to any person/agency for failure to comply with the requirements of the ordinance/regulation
- Health Commissioner, in response to safeguarding the health and safety of the public, may cause a public bathing area to be closed

# **Establish monitoring and inspection of beaches**

- **Initial sanitary survey of each licensed location must be conducted prior to opening of the bathing season (Memorial Day – Labor Day)**
- **Initial survey shall include any items impacting health/safety of beach users (storm drains, septic systems, man-made hazards)**
- **Safety and Sanitation guidelines must be established**
- **Visual inspection of the beach (daily) must be conducted when obtaining water samples**



## Establish good working relation with testing lab for *E. coli* analysis/reporting

- EPA certified lab with prior experience in testing bathing beach water samples
- Lab supplies furnished by testing lab
- Refrigerate during transport
- Regular drop-off time and place
- Utilize the same reporting contact
- Results released to Health Department



# Sampling frequencies

- **Cuyahoga County**
  - 4 times per week (Monday through Thursday)
- **Lorain City**
  - 5 times per week (Monday through Friday)
  - Saturday sampling if water quality advisory is in effect



# Data interpretation

- Health Department determines if water quality standards have been exceeded based on lab results
  - Ohio recreational water quality standards for *E. coli* require that the geometric mean of the last 5 samples does not exceed 126 *E. coli* colonies/100 ml



# Reasons for beach closure/advisory

- Accidents or spills (obvious contamination of the beach)
- Water quality (bathing beach water quality not meeting bacteriological standards)
- Safety (inclement weather conditions, inadequate lifeguards or safety equipment)



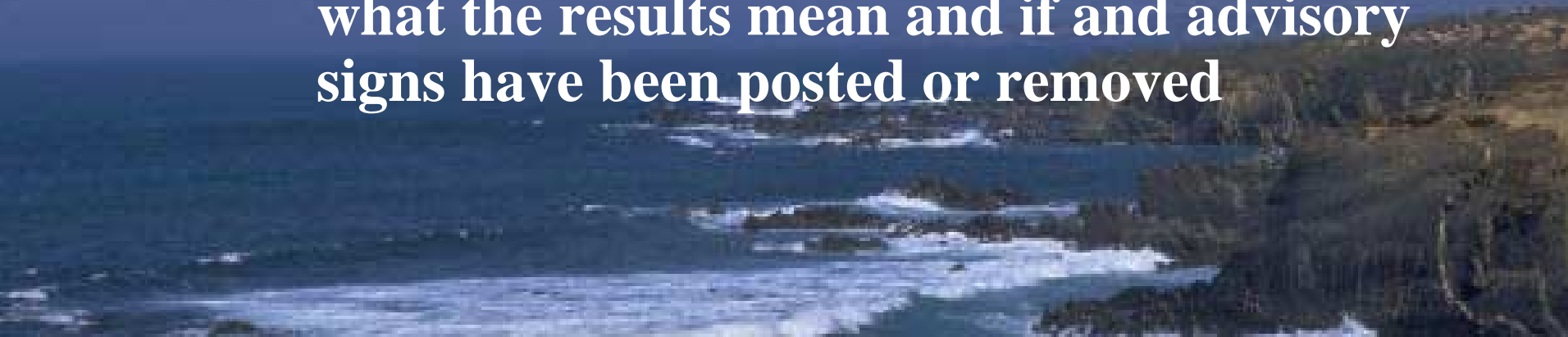
# Notification of Beach Operators

- Health Department notifies operators of water sample results and the need to post advisory signs, if warranted
  - Public beach operators must post advisory signs if standards are exceeded
  - Semi-public (“private”) beach operators must inform their members in writing
  - Operators are notified when advisory signs can be removed/bacterial water quality has returned to acceptable levels



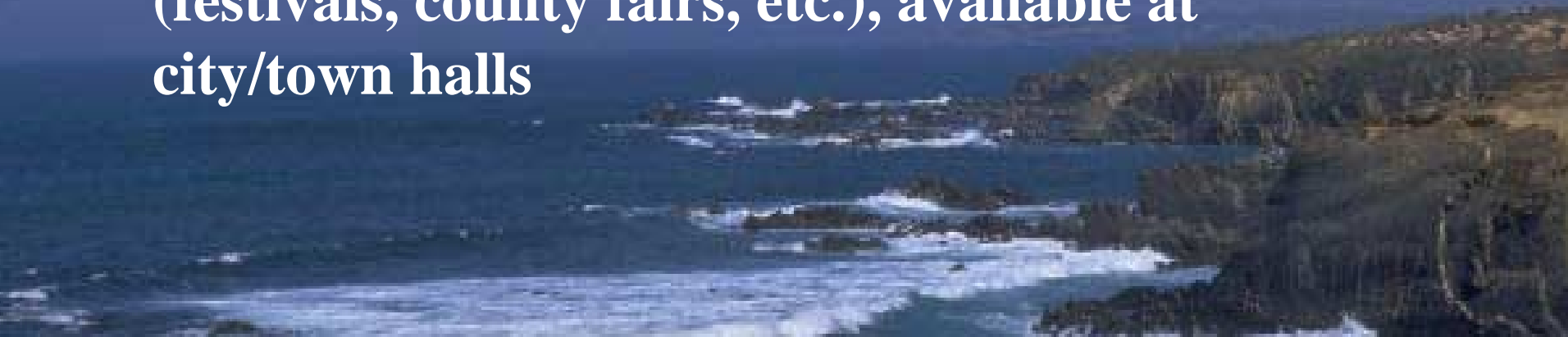
# Data dissemination

- **Local Health Departments provide water quality data to the public**
  - Telephone calls from the public with water quality questions are answered by sanitarians
  - Water quality data is provided on website
    - Website is updated as beach results are received
    - Website gives simplistic description of what the results mean and if and advisory signs have been posted or removed



# Public education

- **Water quality signs are available at the beach**
  - Signs contain recommended user guidelines
  - Signs are posted at each beach entrance for public visibility
- **Informational brochures are available on site at each beach location**
- **Informational brochures distributed upon request, made available at community events (festivals, county fairs, etc.), available at city/town halls**



# Media involvement

- Utilize local radio stations for data dissemination
- Utilize television and newsprint media
  - Media typically contacts local health departments to report of “bad” water quality conditions
    - Utilize these contacts for educational purposes (Inform public of when not to swim at the beach – ex: rain events)





# Networking

- Grant opportunities
  - Allows for contacts to be established not only by the grantee, but by other grant participants
- Involvement between local, state, and federal agencies
  - Participation in conferences (ex: Great Lakes Beach Conference)
  - Tracking legislation
    - Essential for a strong program

